



Stroke Patients Benefit from Technology

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Stroke patients are the driving force for many medical innovations, including a mechanical hand.

It's not technically a mechanical hand, to be completely accurate; it's a Saebo Flex Orthosis. But whatever we call it, Heather Hayes, a physical therapist at the U, says it helps patients in many new and unique ways.

Heather Hayes, PT, DPT, U of U Health System: "So typically stroke patients only have the ability to grasp, but not the ability to open their hand. And so this device allows, it's spring loaded, and it allows the hand to be fixed into a more open position."

Because they can now grasp items, the whole upper body benefits.

Heather Hayes, PT, DPT, U of U Health System: "So now that the hand is open, they now realize that, 'Wow, I didn't know that I could reach and use my elbow and my shoulder like I could.'"

As they learn to relax the device can help develop the ability to do more practical things, like picking up a fork, and over time gradually increasing normal routine. The key to recovery, according to Hayes, is more intensity, practice and repetitions, but that's boring.

Heather Hayes, PT, DPT, U of U Health System: "Wow, I didn't know I could do that before. Now look, I can pick up this ball and I can now move it. So we're getting more repetitions because of that opening of the hand."

Physical therapy today is a blend of clinicians, scientists and new technology. And patients are benefiting from it as never before.